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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides the knowledge and tools college and university students and their professors need to develop a partnership with organizations that work with children who are potential dropouts. Section 1 looks at childhood in the 1990s and section 2 introduces partners who can help potential dropouts. Section 3 considers issues related to dropouts, including two major reasons students give for dropping out and what happens to high school dropouts and their impact on society. Section 4 summarizes prevention research. It describes four assets identified as found in successful children--social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose--and discusses "protective factors" that can facilitate healthy development of positive assets: caring and support, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation. Section 5 addresses ways for college and university students to help. It discusses significant differences between community service and service learning and describes the service learning framework and its four components: preparation, action, reflection, and celebration. Section 6 describes a process for establishing an effective partnership: find partners, set objectives, do it, evaluate, and celebrate. Section 7 provides eight profiles of excellent college and university community service and service learning partnership programs. Contact information is provided. Contains 10 references and 8 additional resources. (YLB)

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LINKING LEARNING WITH LIFE

Partners In Prevention

Involving College Students In Dropout Prevention

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Partners In Prevention

Involving College Students In Dropout Prevention

by Marty Duckenfield and Scott Brown

Linking Learning With Life

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Table of Contents

American Childhood in the 1990s 1

Introducing the Partners 3

Issues Related to Dropouts 5

An Ounce of Prevention 7

Ways for College and University Students to Help 11

Establishing an Effective Partnership 14

Model Programs 20

References 31

Further Resources 32

American Childhood in the 1990s

It is Tuesday afternoon, and Marie arrives home from school just before 3 o'clock. Her mother, who works third shift at the local factory, is now relaxing by watching her favorite soaps. Marie, a 4th grader, grabs her own snack and joins her mother. When the soaps are over, Marie and her mother watch Oprah. After supper, Marie might do her homework, although she does not enjoy school and has difficulty in reading. Usually, she just watches more TV.

Marie and her mother live in an inner city area where gang activity is starting to infiltrate the neighborhood. Marie's mother is extremely concerned that Marie not be out in the neighborhood any more than she needs to. Therefore, playing outdoors is forbidden. Thus, most days Marie just comes home and spends time with her mom, watching television.

Adam is a four year old preschooler who attends a local prekindergarten day-care center while his father works two jobs. His mother died of a drug overdose when Adam was two. Although his father does the best he can considering his work schedule, Adam only sees him at night when he gets picked up from the day-care center, and early in the morning when he gets dropped off. His father is usually exhausted by the time he picks Adam up, and therefore is not very communicative with the boy.

Adam's day-care center has a large number of children, and it is very rare that Adam gets much individual attention. Adam has difficulty in getting along with the other children. He tends to start fights over toys, and does not know how to talk about the situations he finds himself in. He then gets angry and frustrated and extremely difficult for the workers in the day-care center to help.

These are not uncommon stories today and not nearly as alarming as the case studies of the thousands of abused and neglected children in our country. In many cases, children are being denied their childhoods; they lack positive adult role models; their view of life is limited by a culture of poverty, crime, and deprivation. All of these children are

facing an uncertain future. The essential building blocks needed for living a productive life are missing.

We as a society can help provide those building blocks. This guidebook is dedicated to promoting partnerships which can provide some effective solutions towards that end.

Introducing the Partners

You want to help children like Adam and Marie. You recognize that they are just children and the challenges they must face in order to succeed are great—not insurmountable, but great. With a bit of help, thoughtfully directed to the right places, Adam and Marie could meet these challenges and have a better opportunity to lead productive lives.

There are millions of children such as Adam and Marie who live in worlds where something they need is missing, something that is not naturally a part of their lives. Children like Adam and Marie live in cities and they live in small towns; these children are found throughout the United States. And, according to all the statistics, there is a good chance that they will drop out of school.

Is there something that can be done? Although there is an opportunity for everyone to play a role, college and university students are in a unique position to provide for the special needs of these children. With their youth, their enthusiasm, and the skills and knowledge they are learning from their courses, these students can contribute significantly to children who are at risk.

This booklet emphasizes what college and university students, as well as their professors, can do in partnership with the world outside their campuses. Instead of just observing that world, they can help change it by their involvement. Through community service and service learning, postsecondary students can take part in providing for the many needs of the millions of Maries and Adams who live in those communities.

How can this come about? There are some terrific opportunities just waiting to be created when a special partnership is forged to help these children. This guidebook advocates a partnership between organizations that work with children (e.g., schools, day-care centers, boys and girls clubs, and local recreation departments) and nearby college and university students and faculty. These "Partners in Prevention" can indeed make a difference with our children, assisting them in overcoming the barriers that may keep them from a future of hope and promise.

This guidebook will provide the knowledge and tools you need to develop such a partnership. Its aim is to provide you with the strategies that work and an understanding of why they work, based on true prevention. There **is** hope for these children, and you **are** in a position to make a difference. The time to get started is **now**.

Issues Related to Dropouts

It is happening in America, every day. Approximately 497,000 young people drop out of high school, grades 10 through 12, each year (1). Add this to those who have left before tenth grade, and you will see well over 1,500 children leaving school each of the 365 days in a year.

Why do youth drop out? When young people who have dropped out are asked why they left school, a sizable number (42.9%) report that they did not like school; that they were failing in school (38.7%); and that they could not keep up with school work (31.3%) (2).

Lack of success in academic work is, not surprisingly, a major cause of dropping out.

Other interesting issues surface by asking dropouts why they left school. Difficulty in getting along with other people is apparent in these numbers: 22.8% self-reported that they could not get along with teachers; 14.5% could not get along with other students; 24.2% felt they didn't belong; 10.6% changed school and did not like the new school; and 15.5% were suspended or expelled from school (3).

A lack of social skills development is a common characteristic of dropouts.

What happens to dropouts? When young people drop out of school in the 1990s, a chain of events is started that rarely existed 25 years ago. Today dropouts have a more difficult time in finding a job. Factories are closing down everywhere. Unskilled jobs have been going overseas. It's not easy making a living on the minimum wage—even if they can get a job. Almost half of the dropouts are unemployed 12 months after dropping out (4). Dropouts are less likely to be hired than high school graduates or those with higher educational achievements.

Many dropouts who have been unable to get a job join the welfare rolls. In fact, high school dropouts were more than twice as likely to receive income from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or public assistance as high school graduates who did not go on to college (5).

Many of the welfare recipients who are high school dropouts are

female—single teenage mothers who left school because of pregnancy and the need to care for their babies. Nearly 30% of female dropouts leave school because of pregnancy (6).

Eighty-two percent of America's prison inmates are high school dropouts (7). It has frequently been noted that the average cost to society per year to educate a child is $4,000 in the public school system while it costs an average of $20,000 per year to maintain a prison inmate (8). Public dollars are too scarce to support such wasteful spending.

Society's problems are deeply entwined with the issue of dropouts: poverty, welfare, teen pregnancy, gangs and violence, drugs, and crime. The devastating effect that dropping out of school has on society is clear. But it equally affects the **individual** lives of millions of Americans each year. They enter a world where there is little hope and few dreams. Lives that could have contributed meaningfully to communities are wasted; they often become enemies of these same communities, and really, of themselves.

Now What?

We have noted the two major reasons students give for dropping out of school: lack of success in academics and a lack of social skills. We also have looked at what happens to high school dropouts and their impact on society.

To really solve a problem, we need to go to the root cause. How can we provide meaningful assistance in our efforts to help these children who are at risk? The place to find the answer to this question is the exciting and hopeful research on what is working in prevention, not only dropout prevention, but also prevention of other high-risk behaviors. Let us look at what the prevention research can teach us.

An Ounce of Prevention

High school dropouts don't just happen overnight. The origins of academic failure in school—low self-esteem, alienation from school and society, bad choices in youth activities, lack of vision for future goals as well as other problem behaviors—go back to a student's early childhood. True prevention **must** start early in a child's life.

The field of prevention has taken a decidedly positive turn in the 1990s, and this summary is based on the outstanding work of Bonnie Benard (9). Instead of focusing on the risks and deficits of children from at-risk situations, preventionists such as Benard study the assets found in children who have managed to succeed. The researchers examine the commonalities found in the lives of children who succeeded although they were from troubled families, neighborhoods rampant with drugs, or overcrowded schools. Their research provides us with the guidelines necessary for fostering the positive development of young people and identifies four assets that are found in successful children: social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose.

Social Competence.

- Children with the asset of social competence show responsiveness to others, are able to adapt to new situations or circumstances, have the capacity for empathy and caring, have good communication skills, and have a good sense of humor. These are children who can get along well with adults as well as their peers and have had experience in using these skills.

Problem-Solving Skills.

- Children with this asset have the ability to attempt alternative solutions to problems they confront, whether cognitive or social. Children who have to negotiate difficult situations during their daily routine develop good problem-solving skills.

Autonomy.

- Children with this asset have a sense of independence, high self-esteem, an "I can do it!" attitude, and a real sense of power over

their lives. These children have had opportunities to be in situations where they had significant responsibilities.

Sense of Purpose.

- Children who possess this asset are goal-directed, success-oriented, persistent, and motivated to achieve, with high educational aspirations and a belief in a positive future. Someone or something in their environment has helped them develop a belief that they can actually have a future if they work at it.

Children who would be considered at risk **can** achieve success when they possess these assets. These assets, in fact, make them stress resistent, invincible, or in the terminology of the researchers, "resilient." In a way, it inoculates them against the negative factors in their lives, protecting them from the harmful influences found in their everyday world.

How do you develop and enhance these assets?

The best environment for developing such assets and producing resilient children does not exist naturally for many children. It certainly does not exist for Marie or Adam. By looking at the natural environments of children at risk, we can begin to see what areas need developing and enhancing.

Children spend their lives in a variety of settings—the family environment, the school environment, and the community environment. The children's development is based upon their interactions within these environments. Factors which can facilitate healthy development of positive assets can be found in any of the three environments. In fact, if lacking in one environment, (e.g., the family), some kind of positive factor can be provided from another environment, (e.g., the community), in compensation.

There are certain positive factors that we, as part of the home, school, or community environment can provide for children in need.

Prevention researchers call these positive factors "protective factors." With these protective factors in place, a child will have more opportunities to develop those assets which have been shown to have such a high correlation with successful children. By examining what these protective factors are, we can develop methods for providing children with the support they need to better control their lives. What are these factors which can be so powerful they can change the course of a child's life?

Caring and Support.

- Children need to have someone who cares about them. They need social networks that provide them with support. They need access to health care, child care, decent housing, good education, job training, and recreation. This factor is related to the development of both academic skills and social skills. Mentoring, tutoring, recreational programs with peers, and job shadowing all are important ways that a caring and supportive person can make a difference.

High Expectations.

- Young people need to be valued as resources by their families, schools, and communities. They need people to believe in them, to challenge them to high aspirations, to expect them to make great achievements. Without someone encouraging those dreams, will a child from a family that has no history of postsecondary education strive for higher goals? Will he take the difficult road no one in his world has ever taken before, even if he has the potential? Opportunities such as a challenging curriculum, leadership programs, and conducting scientific experiments incorporate high expectations and enhance social and academic development.

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation.

- Children need to be involved in activities that are relevant to their lives, that have meaning to them. They need opportunities to be contributing members of their families, schools, and communities. By contributing to their environment, children bond to that environ-

ment; they develop a sense of belonging, a crucial need in youth development. Learning and understanding are greatly enhanced by the relevance and participation found in community service and service learning activities as well as entrepreneurial projects. This protective factor has a powerful impact on academics as well as social skills development.

With this research as a foundation, you can easily become an optimist in a field that has been riddled with pessimism. Educators and youth workers alike have wondered how they can help children who come from such overwhelmingly difficult situations. The feelings of helplessness that many have felt working in this field are understandable; however, with the new research and its strategies of **real** prevention, a feeling of hope is emerging.

It's really pretty simple when you get right down to it. Look at a child's natural environments of home, school, and community. Does he need more caring and support? Is anyone holding high expectations for him? Does this child ever have the opportunity to be a respected contributor to a meaningful activity? Where there is a lack in any of these environments, there is an opportunity for someone to make a difference.

College and university students can evaluate interventions for working with children by noting if they are providing the protective factors needed to build, strengthen, and enhance an at-risk child's positive assets. School personnel and youth workers can involve college and university students in programs which incorporate the protective factors of caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation.

Ways for College & University Students to Help

Colleges and universities offer a variety of opportunities for students to be involved in the communities in which they reside. Either through community service, or, more formally, through service learning, students can be involved in some very effective dropout prevention efforts. There are, however, significant differences between community service and service learning.

What is Community Service?

Community service occurs when volunteers provide a service to their community. On just about every college or university campus, there are a variety of student organizations with some level of involvement in service to the nearby community. Sororities, fraternities, and clubs of all kinds abound. Frequently, campus volunteer centers provide a central place for both students and the community to find each other.

Students interested in providing assistance for children can find opportunities to be mentors or tutors, recreational leaders and coaches, family literacy workers, and a variety of other roles that can help these children be successful. Campus volunteer centers often maintain databases of local community programs and their volunteer needs. By serving youth and their families, college youth can focus their volunteer efforts on supplying the protective factors which members of the community at large can successfully provide.

What is Service Learning?

Service learning shares the common denominator of service with community service. It, too, meets community needs. But service learning is so much more than community service. It requires that the service activity be integrated into the goals of the academic curriculum and therefore adds a richer dimension to the service. Students frequently receive academic credit for service learning. The quality of service provided by the college and university students is greatly

enhanced by their academic preparation and knowledge base. In many respects, the service recipients are receiving service from paraprofessionals. The input of faculty can add new dimensions to the service provided.

Students in institutions of higher education will, like all learners, better master the curriculum if they must apply it to real-life situations. Professors can meet their curricular objectives and, in fact, strengthen the learning that takes place by making connections between the academic objectives and the service opportunities in their communities.

Children and families in at-risk situations have a great many needs that are relevant to the content of a wide variety of academic disciplines: education, nutrition, recreation, health and nursing, sociology, psychology, science, math, and English, just for starters. Professors can provide meaningful assistance to their communities by giving their students opportunities to serve in a variety of ways. They can then increase the learning that takes place by requiring students to engage in research and training prior to and during the service activity. In addition, by utilizing an ongoing reflection process, professors can encourage more productive service experiences and deepen the actual learning.

Faculty and students interested in service learning should investigate the resources suggested in our Resource Section. A simple introduction to the service learning framework, however, can provide the reader with a better understanding of this concept.

The service learning framework consists of four components—preparation, action, reflection, and celebration (10).

Preparation consists of the learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. Before they provide the service, students must understand what is expected of them as well as what they can expect from the service project. Preparation components include the following:

- identifying and analyzing the problem
- selecting and planning the project
- training and orientation

Action is the service itself and needs to meet certain criteria. It must:

- be meaningful
- have academic integrity
- have adequate supervision
- provide for student ownership

Reflection enables students to critically think about their service experience. When students reflect on their experiences, they think about them, write about them, share them with others, and learn from them. It is an excellent opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of their service. Reflection time is a structured opportunity for students to learn from their experiences. They can reflect through:

- discussion
- reading
- writing
- projects
- the arts

Celebration is the component of service learning that recognizes students for their contributions. It also provides closure to an ongoing activity. Society needs to let young people know that their contributions are valued. Some of the ways to incorporate celebration are:

- end of the year party with service recipients
- in-class presentations
- special media coverage
- recognition by college or university

Partnerships in service learning activities between schools or community organizations and higher education institutions will benefit all partners involved. Together these partners can offer each other a great deal–a true win/win situation. College and university students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge to a real life problem, using their skills to address the needs of a child who is socially, economically, or educationally disadvantaged. Using these skills to effect change can have a profound and long-lasting impact. Likewise schools and community organizations benefit when a child is a recipient of some special attention, given a chance to perform a demanding science technique, or provided the opportunity to perform in a play. These are the kinds of life-changing events that can make a difference—supplying what children need to overcome the adversities that challenge them.

Establishing an Effective Partnership

It is not enough to have a good idea for a service project. The coordinated and ongoing planning that a partnership can provide is essential for the success of any project. The following process can guide you as you establish your dropout prevention partnership between college or university students and a school or organization which works with children at risk.

1. Find Partners.

Teachers and community leaders looking for college student volunteers, such as tutors or mentors, could begin their search in the following sites on campus:

Service Learning Center

- This may be the best place to start. Many campuses have developed these offices to help faculty and students find service learning sites.

Student Affairs Office

- Many colleges and universities have a community service office as a part of Student Affairs. They help students find community service placements and help to coordinate service for many student organizations. If there is no specific community service office, Student Affairs may be able to suggest some student organizations committed to service.

Student Employment Office

- All colleges are required to commit a small percentage of their total work study hours to community service. This commitment is increasing as many colleges are striving to meet the America Reads challenge. Particularly if you are looking for literacy tutors or mentors, this office could be very helpful.

Specific Academic Departments

- A department chair may be able to direct you to professors interested and active in service learning.

School News Media

- Browsing through the school newspaper or the college web site may turn up existing service projects and provide ideas for people to contact.

Varsity Athletic Department

- Campus athletes are becoming increasingly involved in community service and service learning as coaches realize the positive impact on their athletes and on public relations for the teams.

Student Organizations

- Sororities and fraternities usually have a strong commitment and interest in service.

College faculty can begin partnerships with schools by contacting the following persons:

District Superintendent

- Superintendents will be able to inform you of any system-wide programs, such as tutoring, mentoring, or after-school recreation programs. They may also be able to point you in the direction of schools that would be interested in the service you are proposing.

At-Risk Coordinator

- Many school districts have an at-risk coordinator working in the superintendent's office. The coordinator would be aware of existing programs with at-risk youth and may be able to suggest teachers and guidance counselors who would welcome volunteer support.

Principal or Assistant Principal

- Principals are the gateway to working in specific schools. They would be able to inform you if the school has a volunteer coordinator or suggest specific teachers or guidance counselors who may be interested in involvement.

Specific Teachers

- Build on existing relationships; many successful partnerships begin with informal relationships. If you know teachers personally, they

may provide a good starting point. During the planning stage, seek the administrative support of the principal.

Guidance Counselors

- Counselors are aware of the needs of the at-risk children in their schools and the existing efforts to work with them. They may also be able to help you find classes to work with and help you begin after-school activities for the youth.

College faculty may also wish to generate service opportunities in the broader community or with community-based organizations.

Local Government Offices

- Local government can provide a good place to start for very general or large-scale service projects. You could start at the Mayor's office, municipal or county parks and recreation departments, department of social services, or the county welfare office.

United Way

- This is the place to start for locating appropriate sites in community based organizations. Local offices often keep a database or a list of agencies that need volunteers and can set you up with specific agency contacts.

Organizations Serving Youth

- Many communities are served by YMCA/YWCA, Boys Club/Girls Club, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. You may wish to directly contact these agencies that serve children who may be at risk.

2. Set Objectives.

Once you have found people interested in initiating a partnership, meet to agree on the goals and objectives of the program. Meet with the key players from all constituencies which may include college faculty, classroom teachers, and directors from community-based organizations. Do not forget to involve representative college students

and youth to be served (when appropriate) in the planning process; they will have important insights to share.

- Have all constituents share and agree on goals for the program. Be sure to clearly communicate goals for each group. For example, one goal for children in a tutoring program may be to increase test scores in reading; a goal for college students serving as tutors may be to gain exposure to teaching.
- Develop and reach a consensus on a set of objectives, and establish a time line. Objectives should detail how the goal will be accomplished, and include specific steps towards reaching goals.
- Set standards for evaluation. The goals and objectives should be realistic, specific, and tangible to allow for an accurate evaluation.
- Assign roles and responsibilities and clearly communicate shared expectations.

3. Do It!

Proper planning should enable the volunteers to work independently. There are several principles of practice to keep in mind. The most successful programs have the following elements in common:

- Provide ongoing feedback. Volunteers will be most committed if they feel their work is important, that they are making a difference. Make sure they can see their results and share verbal feedback.
- Emphasize consistency. Particularly if volunteers are working directly with youth, make sure they show up regularly as scheduled.
- Require a long-term commitment. Working effectively with youth requires long-term relationships built on trust. Ideally, volunteers should work with the same children for at least a school year.
- Maintain communication among all key players. Hold regular meetings. Be sure to include students, volunteers, teachers, college faculty, parents, and any other community members involved.

4. Evaluate.

Evaluation is a process of reflection in which we learn from the challenges and successes of a program. Through this process, we can find guidance for future planning. The basic question of any evaluation is: How successful was the program at meeting its objectives and accomplishing its goals? This question can be answered by conducting formal surveys or by informally asking questions and observing the program in action.

Short-Term Projects

For individuals or small groups involved in short-term service projects, an informal evaluation will be the simplest and most appropriate. Observing the service activities and asking basic, open-ended questions of some participants can provide a general sense of the effectiveness of the program.

- Observe interactions between people during the service project activities. Are all participants engaged in the activities? Do they look like they are enjoying and benefitting from the experiences? Listen for casual comments about the experience and pay particular attention to recurring themes.
- Talk to children during and/or after the service. Ask what they like about the program. You may also want to have them write a brief reflection of their experiences.
- Talk to students who are providing service. What have they learned? Would they participate again?
- Talk to teachers and parents of the children involved. Have they noticed changes in their children after participating in the program? What do the children say about the program at home?

Long-Term Projects

Many long-term partnership programs can benefit from formal evaluations. Not only are evaluations important for attracting and sustaining funding, but they will also help program directors build on the past success to develop the best possible program. College students from social science disciplines could assist with evaluations as a service learning project.

- Survey or interview children on their attitudes about school classes, teachers, and the volunteer program itself. By using a pretest/posttest design, you could gauge the amount of change over time.
- Survey or interview teachers and parents about changes they have seen in the children since their involvement in the program. Ask whether children seem to be learning new concepts and vocabulary through the volunteer program.
- Collect data from the school on standardized test scores, grade averages, absentee rates, and number of disciplinary referrals and see whether they have improved since involvement in the programs.

5. Celebrate!

Recognize the efforts and successes of the program.

- Plan a celebration for the end of the program or the end of the year for all participants. This can be a festival, providing a forum for sharing projects, or simply a fun party. This is an important step that rewards individuals for involvement and provides an opportunity for closure, allowing participants to say good-bye to each other.
- Create awards for faculty, teachers, volunteers, and students who were involved in the program.
- Release news of service events to the media such as the school paper or local news media.

Model Programs

Many colleges and universities and their partners in nearby communities are building on this optimistic vision of youth development in their successful dropout prevention programs. Their efforts focus on developing the assets of children so they can develop the resilience they need to face life's adversities.

"Shifting the balance or tipping the scales from vulnerability to resilience may happen as a result of one person or one opportunity."

–Bonnie Benard

As you will note in the following eight profiles of excellent college and university community service and service learning partnership programs, the programs develop, strengthen, or enhance the children's assets by providing one or more of the protective factors: caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation. As you develop your partnership, be mindful of these factors; you will have a greater chance of achieving success if you do.

Peace Games

◆ Peace Games was designed to teach children alternatives to violence in resolving conflicts. In 1990, students at Harvard University began to teach the curriculum in Boston public schools. Since that time, the program has expanded to include volunteers from other colleges around the Boston area and has changed from a program for fifth and sixth graders to a comprehensive school-wide program for grades one through eight.

In the Peace Games program, college student volunteers provide weekly instruction to elementary school children in conflict resolution and violence prevention. Teams of three college students work together

in the classroom using fun activities to teach about feelings behind conflicts, the process of escalation and de-escalation, and creative problem-solving skills. The program is designed to match developmental stages between grades one through eight. For example, first and second graders learn to name feelings by reflecting on stories and using art activities; and seventh and eighth graders focus on group processes and group safety through participating in role playing and creating skits.

Peace Games is designed not only to change individuals but also to recreate the school culture and community environment. Teachers and parents are offered training in the conflict resolution methods and are given comprehensive manuals detailing the activities and vocabulary of peace games and the structures of conflict resolution.

Peace Games uses a co-curricular service learning system; college students are not involved through official college courses, but they do participate in structured learning activities. Volunteers receive twenty hours of training before becoming a Peace Games teacher, and four times during the year all volunteers participate in reflection and evaluation sessions. Each volunteer is asked to work informally in the schools four to five hours each week beyond teaching the Peace Games curriculum. Volunteers often serve as mentors, tutors, or music teachers, or they may come during recess to lead games with the kids. These additional hours help to build trusting relationships between the children and volunteers and facilitates the learning process.

For more information, contact: Eric Dawson, Executive Director
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617-628-5555 e-mail: eric@peacegames.org

Project Amistades

◆ Migrant farm workers face tremendous challenges for survival. The combination of extreme poverty, poor housing, limited access to health care, migratory lifestyle, and language barriers put the children of these families at extreme risk of dropping out of school. Project Amistades is a co-curricular service learning program organized and developed by Florida State University (FSU) students to assist migrant families in remote rural areas of Gadsden County, Florida. In this community, most of the migrant farmers speak Spanish, and very few are literate in, or fluent speakers of, English. The university students work with the migrant community in several ways: They assist with language interpretation in mobile health clinics, provide legal assistance, teach English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, tutor children, and provide after-school recreation activities.

The tutoring program is a central aspect of Project Amistades. Once a week on Saturday, tutors ride in a van for an hour from FSU to the rural communities. Discussions during the van ride and organized group activities provide opportunities for reflecting on the experiences and sharing feedback. The tutors teach English literacy skills and also assist with school homework. Periodically project volunteers also combine their efforts to plan and lead after-school recreation activities for all of the children involved in the program. Project Amistades has recently expanded to include other low-income residents in the target community, bringing diverse groups of children together for tutoring and recreation.

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Project Motivation

◆ Project Motivation is a community service mentoring program coordinated by the University of Minnesota YMCA. Each year, this program matches nearly 200 college students from the University of Minnesota with an equal number of public school children from inner city Minneapolis. The college students commit to meet their "little buddies" at least once a week, one-on-one, for recreational activities such as playing in the park or visiting the zoo. For little buddies who need tutoring assistance, the mentors ("big buddies") meet with them in a study group. Several times a year, all the little buddies and big buddies gather together for a large group community service effort, such as cleaning up a park.

During the one-on-one and group experiences, the college students focus on specific areas of growth which they have identified for their little buddies, such as anger control and management, conflict resolution, and self-esteem. Big buddies identify these growth areas through observation and conversations with public school social service workers and families of the little buddies. Project Motivation provides the college student volunteers with ongoing training and support through weekly seminars.

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Project Tutor

◆ In the Project TUTOR program, preservice teachers from Sonoma State University act as mentors and coaches for at-risk fourth through sixth grade students who in turn serve as cross-aged tutors to kindergarten through third grade students. As a part of their education course work for the semester, each college student serves as a mentor once a week to two fourth through sixth grade tutors. The fourth through sixth grade tutors provide homework assistance in after-school programs and serve as reading tutors within school classes. Teacher evaluations of the young tutors show a reduction in behavior problems and a significant improvement in self-confidence.

This cross-age tutoring provides a wonderful opportunity for at-risk children to meet real needs of younger students. The design, using college students to provide guidance and support for the young tutors, encourages the development of meaningful and supportive relationships. Project Tutor has a powerful impact both on the fourth through sixth grade tutors and the younger tutees. Preservice teachers are exposed to the power of service learning and will be more likely to use experiential education techniques in their own classrooms.

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http://www.sonoma.edu/cihs/

Sprouting Wings

◆ In the Sprouting Wings program at Clemson University, graduate and undergraduate students lead at-risk elementary school children in garden experiences and environmental exploration at the South Carolina Botanical Garden. University students are involved in the program through an interdisciplinary course which integrates horticulture and sociology. About 15 university students work with 30 children, providing opportunities for individual and small-group mentoring.

The children, ages seven to ten, are engaged in an after-school gardening program once a week for four months. During this time they work in the South Carolina Botanical Garden and gardens at their schools in such activities as digging beds, weeding, mulching, and transplanting seedlings. During these activities and reflective discussions surrounding them, they learn how plants grow, what plants need to grow, and the relationships between plants and animals.

This partnership has been successful for both the university students and the at-risk children involved. Clemson students have enjoyed working with the children and finding an opportunity to gain practice in the hands-on aspects of their academic learning. The children's self-esteem improves as they benefit from the positive one-on-one interaction with adults and meaningful participation in the community. In addition, working in concert with the college students helps them to identify with role models. This may pique their interest in college and inspire them to expand their expectations in planning their own life goals. The outdoor physical activities of gardening fills a need which is often neglected in the lives of children today.

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STAR Peer Tutoring Programme

◆ The Science/Technology Awareness Raising (STAR) program was initially started in response to a predicted future shortage of skilled scientists in Australia. The program was designed to attract and motivate a new generation of talented young professionals in the science and technology fields. STAR involves an active partnership between Murdoch University, Western Australia public schools, and British Petroleum (BP) Australia.

The core of STAR is the tutoring program. University students tutor once a week in the classrooms of the local schools. Each peer tutor assists science teachers in the classroom and laboratory and offers guidance to students. Assistance to students can be either one-on-one or in small groups. Not only do tutors offer valuable assistance in instruction, but they also serve as role models for the students. This results in increasing student interest and skills in science, as well as expanding the student's expectations and aspirations. By recruiting a large number of young women for tutors, STAR intentionally addresses the problem of gender inequity in the sciences by encouraging girls to pursue education and careers in the science fields.

Another aspect of the program makes use of the industry partners. Tutors lead students on field trips to tour industrial manufacturing and laboratory sites. In this way, students are exposed to a variety of science-based career options. STAR was initially started as a community service program, although it is beginning to develop service learning components. The School of Education at Murdoch University now offers a science communication course in which tutoring in the STAR Programme is an accredited, practical component.

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Summerbridge National

◆ Summerbridge National provides rigorous academics to middle school children during a summer school program. Classes are taught exclusively by high school and college student volunteers, and these young volunteers are also responsible for the day-to-day management of the program. Summerbridge has two central goals: to prepare elementary and middle school students for success in rigorous high school academics and to attract committed and talented leaders to the teaching profession. The program involves a six-week, full-time summer school and year round support through mentoring, tutoring, and counseling.

During the summer school, high school and college students plan courses, teach and evaluate children, and direct the daily administration during the summer school program. Experienced professional teachers offer guidance to the volunteers as needed. The young volunteer faculty provides excellent role models to the students and motivates the students to strive for excellence. The teachers not only lead classes in traditional academic subjects but also are encouraged to design and teach an elective on a topic of interest. Examples of electives include History of Black Entrepreneurship and Women's History. These youth, by serving as role models and sharing their vitality and passion for learning, inspire the students to achieve.

Summerbridge began in San Francisco in 1978 and has since expanded to over twenty sites around the country. Volunteers are selected through a formal application process. The program has been very successful in achieving the stated outcomes: An evaluation in 1996 indicated that 90% of the students go on to attend college preparatory high schools, and 64% of the college-age teachers enter the field of education.

For more information, contact: Summerbridge National
1902 Van Ness Avenue, 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94109
415-749-2875 e-mail: sbnation@aol.com

Walkabout

◆ Walkabout is an alternative summer school program for at-risk K-8 children in Minneapolis. The program is designed and organized by a collaboration of the National Youth Leadership Council and the Minneapolis Public Schools. Local high school and college students, supervised by experienced teachers, serve as teachers, tutors, and mentors to the Walkabout students. Service learning is a central element of the academic program as students plan and engage in projects which serve their communities.

Walkabout has been extremely effective in meeting the goal of improving summer school attendance. Students are motivated by the service learning and benefit from the small classes and increased one-on-one interaction with the tutors made possible by the high school and college student volunteers. Many of the high school students are at risk as well, and serving in Walkabout provides them with an opportunity to earn credits that they lack for graduation. The chance to provide real service to children improves the high school and college students' self-esteem and helps them to gain hope for their future. Many of the high school and college student volunteers decide to enter the field of teaching after their experience in Walkabout.

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http://www.nylc.org

Wellness Begins in Childhood

◆ Food can be a taken for granted part of our lives. Although it is often overlooked, nutrition has a critical impact on a child's ability to learn. The Wellness Begins in Childhood program has had great success in changing the nutrition habits of children in local schools. After children are involved in the program, teachers have reported a marked change in the food children were bringing into schools and an increased awareness of the importance of good nutrition.

This program uses an interdisciplinary collaboration between the education and nutrition departments at Keene State College. Students from the nutrition department provide expertise in content while preservice teachers are experts in the process of learning. Working together, teams of two college students from these departments create and implement nutrition education curricula which are designed to augment existing class subjects. For example, a class studying Ireland participated in a nutrition lesson involving a hands-on activity of baking Irish bread. Each lesson uses a variety of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, including social studies, reading, math, and science. The lessons introduce new vocabulary and require working with fractions and measurements. The hands-on components of cooking and tasting are set up to use a scientific problem-solving methodology.

In addition to providing knowledge and skills for the children to take care of themselves, this program provides an opportunity to improve self-efficacy and generate a sense of empowerment. The concept of food and nutrition is demystified and brought into a sphere that the children can control and master.

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West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC)

◆ The West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) is an ambitious project aimed at revitalizing local communities by transforming public schools into the social and service delivery hubs of their communities. This vision involves restructuring the public school curricula to center around service learning and work-based learning. The program is supported by the community service and service learning of students and faculty at the University of Pennsylvania and other community agencies involved in the WEPIC partnership.

University students serve as after-school tutors, career mentors, and teaching assistants in the public schools. In addition, many of the university students participating in WEPIC work on a variety of action research projects to generate solutions to real community problems. For example, in an environmental studies class, university students design methods of measuring lead toxicity levels in local communities and cooperate with a class of seventh graders to collect and interpret data. The university students then assist the seventh graders in creating and implementing a plan to deal with the problem. Graduate students work with local schools to redesign curricula to be centered around service learning. Thus, the university student volunteers provide a wide range of skills to assist the public schools in becoming social and service delivery hubs of the community.

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215-989-7695 e-mail: cohen@pobox.upenn.edu

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3. Ibid.

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5. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (1996). *March current population surveys.*

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10. M. Duckenfield, & Wright J. (eds.) (1995). *Pocket guide to service learning.* Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

Further Resources

It is time to go into action. America's children need your help today. We encourage you to review the resources below, find your niche in your community, and start a partnership that can put an end to dropouts.

- American Association for Higher Education (AAHE)
1 Dupont Circle, Suite 360, Washington, DC 20036-1110
202-293-6440 web site: http://www.aahe.org

- Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges
1833 W. Southern Avenue, Mesa, AZ 85202
602-461-7392 web site: http://www.maricopa.edu/

- Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL)
1511 K Street, NW Suite 307, Washington, DC 20525
202-637-7004 web site: http://www.cool2serve.org

- Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW, 6th Floor, Washington, DC 20525
202-606-5000 web site: http://www.cns.gov

- National Dropout Prevention Center
205 Martin Street, Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-0726
864-656-2599 web site: http://www.dropoutprevention.org

- National Service-Learning Cooperative/Clearinghouse
University of Minnesota
Department of Work, Community, and Family Education
1954 Buford Avenue, Room R-460, St. Paul, MN 55108
800-808-SERVE web site: http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu

- National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)
3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207, Raleigh, NC 27609-7229
919-787-3263 web site: http://www.38.217.84.36/nsee/

- Service Learning in Higher Education Web Site
University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
http://csf.Colorado.EDU/sl/

National Dropout Prevention Center

College of Health, Education and Human Development
Clemson University, 205 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29634-0726
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